



Louise Abbott Real Estate

Committed to Excellence

Antitrust Division
Attn: Lee Quinn
U. S. Department of Justice
Liberty Place, Suite 300
325 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Ref: Competition Workshop Project No. V050015 Comment

Dear Mr. Quinn;

I am writing you to express my opinions on the industry that I have been a member of for the last twenty five years. I don't feel that you could find a better example of competition/free market/capitalism than the real estate industry. I really believe that real estate is the best model or example of free market capitalism available in our country. We are very different than most industries, in that we only get paid if we succeed. Hopefully, the Dept. of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission still want to promote free market capitalism in our country. Our MLS data is distributed to the entire world on the internet and our industry has changed radically in the last decade.

The real estate industry is a model of competition that works. In an economy in which large, national corporations -- such as Wal-Mart and Microsoft -- dominate the marketplace, real estate stands apart. We are an industry made up predominantly of small businesses and independent contractors who represent the entrepreneurial spirit this country was founded on.

All of us serve localized markets where we compete for business every day. Fierce competition is fueled largely by the uniquely intense and personalized nature of the service we provide to our clients -- which, in turn, determines our future success through referrals and return business.

Barriers to entry are low. If you are willing to take the time to learn the business in your local market, pass the state license examination and adhere to the REALTOR® code of ethics, there is nothing to stand in the way of success in this industry. I had to learn the business and pass the state licensing examination, but it is my own work ethic, commitment to professional standards and dedication to client satisfaction that determine my success.

Even through the economic changes our country has experienced in the past few years, our industry has continued to provide opportunity -- something I would say is confirmed by the thousands of new agents that join our profession every year and the over 2 million Americans who are now licensed to provide professional real estate services in communities across the country. Because of us home ownership is at an all time high.

Nothing encourages a competitive business environment more than providing consumers with choice. In the residential real estate marketplace, consumers not only are able to choose from more than 76,000 brokerage firms and more than 1.2 million REALTORS®, but also from a variety of business models.

The MLS is a cooperative, broker-to-broker offer of cooperation and compensation that help both brokers and customers buy and sell homes. It is not a public utility, nor should it be.

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The beauty of the MLS is that it allows real estate brokerages of every size to compete on a level playing field. It gives all of us access to an inventory of property listings that we are able to show and sell to our clients.

The MLS doesn't discriminate. All MLS members are treated equally, regardless of their size or their business model, and yet the rights of property owners and their listing brokers are respected. The rules of the MLS achieve a delicate balance between respecting the rights of listing brokers so they will continue to be willing to contribute their inventory of listings and permitting cooperating brokers the ability to show those listings and be assured of receiving compensation if they bring about a successful sale.

From my perspective, the new policy is a win-win for consumers and REALTORS®.

It works for consumers because it gives home sellers a choice whether to permit marketing of their property on the Internet and in selecting an MLS member with whom they want to work. It allows them to "opt-in" and have their property displayed on other brokers' Web sites even if they are working with a broker who does not participate in sharing his listings for display by his competitors. And it works for REALTORS® because it gives us the right to control where our listings are displayed on the Internet.

Thank you for considering my point of view,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louise Abbott", with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Louise Abbott

Cc: National Association of Realtors
California Association of Realtors
San Diego Association of Realtors
Federal Trade Commission